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support, moral and practical, in this line of its work, and we of the Cooper Club are in line to help in the securing of more rigid enforcement of existing game and bird laws.

We are pleased to inform Cooper Club members that the entire cost of this large and varied issue of *THE CONDOR* is borne by Mr. John Lewis Childs, whose interest in the Club's welfare needs no further proof. Such a large and generous donation means that we are offering our readers in the present Volume far more than their combined dues and subscriptions would alone provide. We take this opportunity of heartily thanking Mr. Childs.

We have heard that Mr. R. H. Beck is contemplating yet another expedition to the Galapagos Archipelago.

The new Secretary of the Northern Division, Mr. Roswell S. Wheeler, was one of the original group of Cooper Club "boys" who used to hold animated bird meetings at Barlow's or Taylor's thirteen years ago. Those were jolly good times, and there's no reason why we shouldn't enjoy similar occasions now — only, perhaps, we are growing old and our enthusiasm wanes.

Let it be henceforth known, that *THE CONDOR* management will no longer print "For Sale" ads., relating to birds or eggs. We have been informed that it is contrary to the intent of the law to in any way make a commercial commodity out of such specimens, whether taken under permit or not.

Dr. William Lefrange Ralph, the well-known oologist, died at Washington, D. C., on July 8th, at the age of 57.

Dr. Ralph was born at Holland Patent, New York, in 1851. He was graduated in medicine in 1879 from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and afterwards engaged in the practice of his profession in Utica, where he had resided since early childhood; but delicate health obliged him to abandon a medical career, and he turned to the less exacting study of natural history. From early boyhood he had cultivated a taste for this subject, and he now began in earnest the formation of a local collection of birds, eggs, and nests. In the study of the local avifauna he was associated with Mr. Egbert Bagg, and the researches of the two students resulted in the publication of an "Annotated List of the Birds of Oneida County, New York"<sup>1</sup> followed shortly by some "Additional Notes on the Birds of Oneida County, New York."<sup>2</sup>

It was to the subject of oology, however, that Dr. Ralph chiefly directed his attention, and

after nearly completing his collection of local species he spent much time in searching for desiderata, even employing men by the year in the Adirondacks and in Florida to hunt for certain rarities. In this way, and by direct purchase, he added many choice specimens to his collection, and secured valuable information on the nesting habits of various rare species.

Dr. Ralph early made the acquaintance of Major Bendire, and the two men soon became close friends. After the Major assumed charge of the National Museum collection of eggs, he usually spent his vacation in Utica, while Dr. Ralph always stopped at Washington on his annual visits to Florida. When the "Life Histories" were undertaken, he contributed many notes for them, and the two published volumes teem with items from his pen. In 1892 he sent the first installment of his collection to Washington, as a gift to the National Museum. This generous act was followed year after year by other donations, numbering in all about 10,000 specimens, almost all of which were in faultless condition, and accompanied by ample data.

In 1897, Dr. Ralph was chosen to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Major Bendire, and in 1901 his title was changed from Custodian to Curator. In the same year it was announced that he would continue the work on "Life Histories," and he began at once to accumulate data for the third volume (to include the families in the A. O. U. "Check-List" from the Fringillidae to the Cerebidae; but owing to the precarious state of his health the volume was incomplete at the time of his death.

Dr. Ralph was a genial, mild-mannered man, of a uniformly cheerful and gentle disposition, one whose loss will be keenly felt by a large circle of friends and associates.—C. W. R.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### THE POSSESSIVE FORM IN VERNACULAR NOMENCLATURE

Editors of *THE CONDOR*:

Mr. Dawson's suggestion that either the possessive or adjectival form is right in such cases, for example, as *Centronyx bairdii*, seems open to serious question. The sparrow was not given to Mr. Baird. On the contrary, the name of Baird was given to the sparrow. Then why on earth should it be Baird's Sparrow? In many such cases the man whose name is given to the bird has never even seen the species, has had nothing to do with its discovery and was not even aware of the use of his name until the publication of the description. To illustrate,

<sup>1</sup> Trans. Oneida Hist. Soc., III, 1886, pp. 101-147.

<sup>2</sup> Auk, VII, 1890, pp. 229-232.

the writer knows nothing whatever about the bees—would not know one species from another. He happened to be at the head of an expedition which, utterly unknown to him, collected a new species of bee, which was given his name. Why, then, should he be entitled to call it "Henderson's Bee"? Why not call *Motacilla alba*, white's wagtail, to be consistent? Baird is as much honored by speaking of the Baird Sparrow as by using the possessive. If the possessive is to be used, then it should be the name of the man who actually discovered the first recorded specimen, whether he is the one who described it or whose name was given to it, or not.

JUNIUS HENDERSON.

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#### A PRIZE BIRD DIARY

Editors of THE CONDOR:

An interesting ornithological study was recently successfully conducted by the children in Alameda, California. The children were invited to daily record during a given period of two months all birds which they actually themselves observed; to give the name of the bird, popular and scientific name when possible; to describe the bird's plumage; to say when, where and what the bird was doing at the time of observation; to state anything they knew of the habits, food or nature of the birds; whether resident or visitor; whether common or rare. The children were divided into two grades. Class A, 14 years of age to 10 years; Class B, all 10 years or under. Drawings of the birds were also asked for and thus a most interesting series of pictures of birds were obtained. Many of these pictures were colored and displayed marked ability on the part of the young artists. The number of birds observed and recorded by an individual student reached in some cases sixty, and forty different species, a record which not only indicated a very persistent search on the part of the student, but also an abundant local avifauna which was a revelation to the ordinary resident who from his limited field of observation concluded that there were no birds outside of a Sparrow and a Blackbird. Much interest was taken by parents and teachers and the experiment proved one of much attractiveness as well as one of considerable educational value. Prizes consisting of ornithological books were given to the most deserving students; the judges who examined the reports and upon whose decisions the prizes were awarded were the President, Vice President and Secretary of the Northern Division of the Cooper Club. The following birds were among those recorded: Western Gull, Cormorant, Pelican, Wild Ducks, Wild Geese, Great Blue Heron,

Night Heron, Rail, Sandpiper, Curlew, Willet, California Quail, Mourning Dove, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Owl, Burrowing Owl, California Woodpecker, Lewis Woodpecker, Red-shafted Flicker, Allen Hummingbird, Wood Pewee, Western Flycatcher, Blue Jay, Redwinged Blackbird, Meadow Lark, Oriole, Blackbird, Goldfinch, White-crowned Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Oregon Junco, English Sparrow, Oregon Towhee, California Towhee, Grosbeak, Louisiana Tanager, Cliff Swallow, Barn Swallow, Cedar Waxwing, Shrike, Warbling Vireo, Lutescent Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Audubon Warbler, American Pipit, California Thrasher, Winter Wren, Parkman Wren, Nuthatch, Titmouse, Bush-Tit, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Russet-backed Thrush, Dwarf Hermit Thrush, Robin, Varied Thrush, Blue Bird.

FREDERICK W. D'EVELYN

#### PUBLICATIONS REVIEWED

THE EYES AND EYESIGHT OF BIRDS, WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE APPEARANCE OF THE FUNDUS OCULI, by CASEY A. WOOD, M. D., D. C. L., F. Z. S. (= Reprint from *Ophthalmology*, April, 1907, 24 pages, 2 colored plates, 8 illustrations in text.)

Eyesight and the structure of the eye is a most absorbing and interesting study. Since in birds vision reaches its highest expression, and since there are more wonderful adaptations of eye-structure in this class than in any other, surely a few moments spent in the consideration of bird's eyes will not be wasted.

The visual capacity of birds is very great. Dr. Wood takes the case of the humming-bird, which flies more rapidly than our eyes can possibly follow, and yet alights suddenly upon an almost invisible twig; of the woodcock, which flies rapidly thru dense forests, dodging every branch and twig; of the owl, which sees at night as well as it does in the day-time; and of the kingfisher, which can see in the water as well as in the air.

The author makes many original observations upon the likeness and unlikeness existent between the bird's eye and the human eye, taking up the bird's power of accommodation in some details. In this connection he quotes C. William Beebe, who asserts that a bird can transform his eye from a telescope to a microscope in a fraction of a second. A bird is able to see objects a quarter of a mile away which to us would be invisible, while on the other hand it can pick tiny seeds from the dust which we would need a magnifying glass to distinguish.

Much of the paper is devoted to a consideration of the ocular fundus, or the background of the eye as revealed by the use of the ophthalmoscope. Attention is called to the fact that